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TWO YEARS IN THE WHEATLAND;

OR, THE

MASTER'S DAUGHTER.

LAND;

E.

TWO YEARS IN THE WHEATLAND;

OR,

The Master's Daughter.

A ROMANCE OF REAL LIFE.

EDITED

BY

E. F. H.

SOUTHAMPTON:

PRINTED BY E. PAUL AND SONS, HIGH STREET.

1875.

"HER LIFE SEEMS TO ME LIKE A BEAUTIFUL DREAM."

In Memoriam Poem.

Two Years in the Wheatland;

OR,

THE MASTER'S DAUGHTER.

Chapter 1.

THE colouring which romance has given to the closing scene of the subject of these few pages has created a desire among so many to know how she lived before the sad event called their attention to her, that I have been induced to collect and compile the materials for this little narrative in order to meet that wish: indeed, after the tragic close of this bright life, one can hardly suppress a desire to review the details of its earlier history. The permission to give a slight sketch of them has consequently been placed in my hands, together with the use of her father's letters, papers, and verbal information.

Although the title of this sketch will apply to a short period only, it will be necessary to extend it

over many previous years, in order to make the events, in the more prominent period of my narrative, intelligible.

The title itself may sound like a fancy picture or romance, but I will guarantee that no word of fiction or embellishment shall enter its composition: indeed, such a course would be nothing short of insult to one who would have been the first to repudiate any false colouring or misrepresentation, had she lived to have a voice in the matter.

To fulfil my task intelligibly I must begin by a brief recital of family matters.

The estate of HARESTON in the county of Devon was a fine old place—the house, principally of granite—being built in the reign of Henry VII.—and was possessed by the Wood family from time immemorial. The domain, however, had dwindled down to a comparative fragment in consequence of the extravagance of former owners, and many romantic legends were related in the neighbourhood in confirmation of this, as well as of other events connected with it.

Mr. Winter Wood at last, for various reasons which do not affect our present narrative, determined on

selling the property. This was effected in the year 1868.

For many years previous to this however Mr. Wood had resided with his family in France, and it was whilst on his way thither, and during a stay in the island of Guernsey, that MARIE, the chief object of our present attention, was born.

A pretty marine residence, No. 1, Albion Terrace, on the road leading from St. Peter's Port to St. Sampson's, was the spot which had the privilege of sheltering her first hours in the world.

Mr. Winter Wood had always pictured to himself that the ideal of happiness belonging to married life was the possession of a daughter, whom, in his fancy's dreams, he had painted as the personification of beauty and goodness combined.

Mrs. Wood had, up to the time we speak of, presented her husband with four sons, and it may, perhaps, be left to the imagination to conceive the little disappointments and *badinages* which had taken place at each successive presentation. In fact, the anxious father had to contend with many a pointed joke at the non-appearance of his "ideal daughter."

It was reserved for the fifth event to make the

announcement that a "lovely little girl" had been born; and we hardly need describe the satisfaction which the news produced.

From that moment not a word was ever heard from parent or friend on the subject of the ideal daughter. Could this be from an instinctive feeling that the character was realized? The parent was silent in the consciousness that he possessed his soul's picture, and the friend—from never having an opportunity of passing a joke on a perceived imperfection—in the subject of his former raillery.

Soon after the event just alluded to, the Woods crossed over to France; and it was at the inundation of Tours in 1856 that the whole family narrowly escaped being swept away: the little MARIE among the rest being taken down in her father's arms from the bedroom window by a ladder into a boat at midnight, whilst the garden walls belonging to the house were crashing to pieces at each fresh assault of the increasing stream, and the rooms on the ground floor were filled nearly to the ceilings. "*Ou vas-tu mon* "*petit père?*" lisped the little cherub lips, as her father carried her down the tottering ladder.

We must not however dwell on early events more than to say, that the infant grew and flourished—never in her life needing medical advice, or, as far as is known, feeling an ache or pain. She not only grew, but grew into a child of such symmetry and beauty, that at the *Etablissement* at Boulogne, where her parents stayed two or three seasons, she acquired the *soubriquet* of "The Little Model." Speaking French as her native tongue, and with a smattering of broken English, she there became an object of attraction to the visitors of both nations.

We need scarcely say that little MARIE was her father's idol, and with very trifling assistance from figurative language, we may assert that she was hardly ever out of his sight. She was never sent to school, but received her whole education at his hands, with the slight assistance of a French governess; and, of course, excepting the purely feminine accomplishments.

The Woods returned to Hareston in 1860, and it was at the old family estate that MARIE first mounted a pony and rode about the grounds, her constant attendant being one whose relationship to his charge will be readily guessed. Here, too, for a second time,

she narrowly escaped drowning by falling into a fish pond, but, without fright or assistance, she clambered to the side and walked quietly into the house, simply calling the attention of her French *Bonne* by exclaiming with a smile, "*Voyez Josephine, comme j'ai mouillé, ma robe dans l'étang.*"

At the time of the sale of Hareston the Woods resided at Croydon, at a place they built and named after their old family estate. Then it was that Marie's favourite mare, "Jessie"—of which we shall have to speak often hereafter—was bought. Then it was that Marie's qualities as a horsewoman became pronounced. Here she rode a great deal in her father's company; occasionally following the Old Surrey Foxhounds and Surrey Staghounds. Here it may be said her riding education was completed, although it could never be said to have been taught her. She seemed to have been formed by nature for the saddle, both in temperament and physical strength. She never tired: and after ten hours in the saddle, knew neither ache, pain, nor fatigue—cool and collected in every emergency—she never knew a difficulty.

"I shall never forget" writes her father to me

"her first leap—I took her out on her favourite mare
"'Jessie' (which she rode so many years and so
"many thousands of miles afterwards) to look at the
"Croydon Harriers. I kept close to her side—not
"intending to do more than look at the hounds from
"the hill-side. Puss was found and came towards us;
"and up came Bentley, the huntsman, who rode over
"a fence with a considerable "drop" close to where
"we were sitting quietly on horseback. "Jessie"
"threw up her head—shook off the rein and made a
"rush to follow—my head seemed to whirl, but over
"went horse and rider—as neatly and gracefully as if
"the two companions had done the same thing a
"thousand times before."

From that time Marie and Jessie were one, seldom parting company during many a year beyond the distance which separated the dwelling from the stable, or the railway carriage from the horse-box.

"Jessie first taught me to leap" said Marie often afterwards; but no teacher was necessary; for she seemed to have been born a horsewoman. Marvellous indeed that she should have died in her riding-habit!

Once indeed she separated for awhile from her

favourite Jessie (summer of 1872) in order to visit Germany, the Rhine, and Switzerland, on which occasion she rode over hundreds of miles of the most difficult and dangerous passes on mules; which, in comparison with her own good steed, she used to call "a descent from the sublime to the ridiculous;" and with a smile on those pretty lips which scarcely exceeded an inch from corner to corner of her mouth, she would pursue a lively *badinage* in French with the guides as to their treatment and management of their steeds; and as to what they would think of a pack of foxhounds running along the mountain side.

The only drawback to her thorough enjoyment of these excursions was at seeing the amount of fatigue and toil undergone by these guides, nor would she believe that they did not suffer from such extreme exertion. Constant suggestions escaped her from time to time for the care and comfort of those indefatigable men of toil—and every kindly word that could be said was used by her to cheer, as well as destroy the feeling of drudgery which she feared the haughty bearing of many of the excursionists must create.

"What I admired in Miss Wood" said an honest

farmer, while gazing on her when she was lying dead at Chelmarsh Hall "was, that she was *always the same.*"

There was much in these simple words—*she was always the same*—or if any difference could be detected it was ever in favour of the humbler individual. If peer and peasant had been present among her acquaintance in the hunting field, she would have made a point of first shaking hands with the humbler individual from a fear that he might otherwise feel slighted in the presence of his, so called, superior. Such was her nature—such was the aim of her life—ever kind, gentle, and affectionate, the feelings of others ever her study. Self, she only knew as one who wanted little and merited less; and I am quite sure that had the announcement of her death been made to her on the fatal morning, her first thoughts would have been directed to the grief of those whom she was about to leave behind.

Petted—admired and what good orthodox people would have called "spoiled," from the moment of her birth, to the hour of her death she never changed. Pure by nature, she never seemed to be swayed by indulgence or surrounding influences. In fact, indul-

gence had no meaning for her, for she wanted nothing.

Totally devoid of taste for the frivolities and coquetries of fashion, she was never known to express a wish for an article of jewellery or dress. With a little treasure of rings, which she had received as presents, she never placed one on her finger.

No "training" was necessary for such a child. God had created her pure, and she remained so to her latest breath. Her view of the realities of life was to see everything she reasonably could, *once*, and to visit nothing a second time that displeased her. She thus took a brief "experience" of Rotten Row with her favourite mare; but, whilst second to none in symmetry and grace, and conspicuous amidst the various degrees of awkwardness one sees there—she sighed for the green lanes and simple habits of village life. With no taste for rank or fashion, nothing gave her greater displeasure, or more easily aroused that keen cricticism, which was ever latent in her—but never used in the wrong place—than the "airs" of certain classes towards their supposed inferiors. "Save me from great folks," she would often say. How strange that the "great folks" in the neighbourhood who had

made the most condescending professions of friendliness should have been the only ones when she was dead, who never made a word of enquiry for those who were weeping over her grave!

In a work written by her father many years before MARIE'S birth, whilst speaking of female character, the following extract occurs:—

"I may be singular in my taste, but the character "I admire—nay, that I adore—is that sweet, gentle "spirit which, full of love and fondness, shrinks from "inflicting pain on a living creature; yet at the "proper moment would not hesitate to ride over a "five-barred gate, or suck the poison from the "peasant's wound."

It cannot be denied that there was something remarkable in these words; for how could the character before us be described in more correct terms? One can hardly believe that the dream of a life-time could be thus granted and taken away so suddenly in the fulness of its reality without a special object. What was it? So refined and delicate in her tastes that she was often the subject of remark as being unfit to cope with the realities of life on her own account; yet high spirited

and daring enough to make many a man feel his inferiority in pursuits more particularly within his own sphere. A bold and clever skater—a graceful handler of the oar—a more than ordinary manipulator of the cue, even among the opposite sex: and many a visitor at Chelmarsh Hall will long remember those full bright eyes as they looked up from the opposite end of the billiard table when she was about to attempt some difficult "screw."

As a rider, enough is said in other places to leave little doubt that, with a figure which was symmetry itself, and a dashing spirit, which nothing could daunt, she could be compared to nothing more appropriate than to a "swan upon the waters" in elegance and grace.

Such was MARIE; and such was her gentleness that in all her thousands of miles on the road and field, she was never known to lay her whip on her horse's side; nor could she ever be persuaded to do so. The only use she was ever seen to make of that weapon of punishment was to startle an intruding fly from poor Jessie's neck or side; yet often has she been known, with a happy hand on the rein, to leave two

thirds of a field of horsemen behind at a flight of bars or a swinging fence.

Her father writes—"Never shall I forget when on "one occasion, being out with a Western pack, I rode "at a flight bars, and, in one of those fits of obstinacy "occasionally occurring to the best of hunters, my "horse swerved, and repeated the offence again and "again, till at last I whispered—'Marie, ride over'— "she was over in an instant, and a ringing cheer came "from the assembled field—intended, no doubt, to be "at my expense. They did not perhaps think that "that cheer gave me more pleasure than if I had been "hailed as the winner of the greatest steeple chase in "England."

Those who cannot separate thoughtlessness and levity from the dashing spirits of the field, will be instructed in being told that MARIE was never known to go to rest at night, nor to rise in the morning, without kneeling at her bedside and asking God's protection and guidance: whilst on the morning of her death, although (as was ascertained afterwards) she was obliged to lie on her bed during her toilet, she did not omit this sacred duty.

In another letter from her father just received he says :—"In reference to that part of your letter asking "further particulars of one or two facts which marked "her birth and youth : I can only say, that they were "of such a remarkable character as to prevent my "discussing them on account of the fear of being "accused of superstition—about the last thing to "which I should confess, or wish to be mixed up "with my beloved child's memory. Suffice it to say, "that they were simply facts, of easy proof; yet of "such a nature that, in a superstitious age, they might "easily have been invested with supernatural colour-"ing: but it is enough for me to feel that they were "such as to draw me towards her in almost super-"natural love and affection."

MARIE'S strict sense of justice, together with the impossibility of making her believe there was anything vile in the world, were such that it was almost irksome at times to induce her to act in a way which, with the best intentioned, it is often necessary to do in matters of every-day life. One little instance of this may serve as an example of hundreds. I will give it in her father's own words :—

"On one occasion we rode together from Croydon "to Hastings. For several days the weather had been "wet and stormy, but (as I believe I may say of not a "few other occasions) circumstances were made to "meet her wishes, and the departure was postponed "from time to time, she having expressed a strong "desire to ride the whole distance (62 miles) with me. "At length we started with a dry but dubious atmo-"sphere. All went well at first—the gathering for "her of a simple hedgerow flower (her almost only "and favourite ornament) being about the most "remarkable incident which interrupted the even "tenor of our way. But on reaching Limpsfield—"about 15 miles from Croydon—the rain commenced "in torrents. The road-side was anything but rife in "shelter; so, to laugh at the weather and ourselves "was a resource, though it proved no remedy. A "very small road-side inn at last afforded us pro-"tection for a couple of hours; but as no change "for the better promised to take place in the weather, "'onward' was the order of the day, and we decided "on making a push for Tunbridge Wells, a distance "of about another 15 miles. In the highest spirits

"and greatest good humour, she rode through the "pelting rain, and we reached within sight of the "last-named town just as the lamps were lit. With "this beacon to cheer us, the last few miles were "accomplished merrily enough; but I need not say "how drenched was every thread about us.

"Having no other clothing with us except our "night gear, which had been sent on in a small "wallet, there was nothing for the circumstances but "to go to bed; so with the kind assistance of the "proprietress of the Sussex Hotel, and after waiting "on my charge with refreshments as best I could in "my drenched clothes, I retired, leaving our saturated "vestments in the hands of the authorities of the "hostelrie for the night.

"By the most indefatigable exertions—which I "believe lasted nearly the whole night—all was dry "(except the weather) by the following morning. "Again we started on our journey, amidst alterna-"tions of sunshine and pelting showers—and again "we reached about half way on our day's journey "tolerably well, with a little assistance from wayside "sheds and sheltering trees: but here again the

"elements resumed their form of the previous day, "with the addition of thunder and lightning. The "country people gazed from their cottage doors, and "no doubt passed many a joke on our very unorthodox "appearance, while one kind hearted rustic rushed to-"wards my daughter with a large umbrella, of which he "almost forced her acceptance without fee or security.

"Long delays again made us late—the night grew "dark, and the weather grew worse. The thunder "rolled, and the lightning was so vivid, that ever and "anon our horses started and seemed about to fall as "if shot. The hail and rain literally descended in "torrents.

"I proposed staying at a roadside inn, but as we "had arranged to meet the rest of our party at "Hastings that evening, my plucky little girl of "seventeen would hear of no surrender.

"On we went; and I need not describe the state we "were in, after about twelve more miles in this weather, "and we had still four or five more to do. But no "complaint escaped *her* lips (I fear I cannot say so "much for others). The frequent recurrence of turn-"pike gates may be familiar to travellers on this line

"of road, but certainly to myself on that night they "seemed to require a special 'turnpike gate escape "act' for the occasion.

"Drenched clothing, close buttoned coats, and "delays in the dark in search of coppers, cannot be "supposed to improve the temper; so, few will be "surprised to hear that, after paying pike after pike, "and exclaiming, 'this *must* be the last,' two or three "times over, that I at last buttoned up my coat with "a determination that it *should be so.* But another "occurred, and at MARIE'S entreaty, I paid it, and "the same process was repeated. Another! and I "grew desperate—'Ride on, MARIE,' cried I, clapping "my heels to my horse's sides; but she pulled up, "and it was not till I had ridden on some distance "that she followed me.

"The night was such that I hardly think the toll-"keeper regretted this little extempore act of parlia-"ment which I carried without consulting any of the "members of the house, but I believe MARIE hardly "ever forgave me for it, and would not let the matter "rest till I promised to ride over from Hastings some "fine day and pay the toll."

No pain or toil would have been too great for her where a penny was due. No self-sacrifice too much in any position of either duty, affection, or enterprise.

On the occasion of her visit to Chamounix, her father proposed her joining him in the ascent of Mont Blanc—a project which she readily and gladly embraced; but other influences prevailed, and the idea was abandoned for that year. Both father and daughter were however reluctant to discard the project, and in order to pave the way to secure it, a partial ascent of the mountain was made as a *reconnaissance*, and guides were actually engaged to make the ascent the following season.

Circumstances and influences however again worked their changes, the mastership of the Wheatland, as will be hereafter seen, being the primary one: and the following year found the inseparable pair at the summit of Snowdon instead of Mont Blanc! "Another instance," remarked MARIE, of the "steps we take from the sublime to the ridiculous—but "then," added she, "it is characteristic of our age of "luxury: for here we ride, whilst there we should have "been obliged to climb like so many chamois."

She always regretted this relinquishment of a favourite project, and certainly no human being was ever better formed, both morally and physically, for the peculiar enterprise : so gentle, sweet, and amiable, that no angry or unkind word was ever heard to escape her lips ; yet with a dashing and indomitable spirit of perseverance, that would have surmounted any difficulty in the ascent, together with a self-denial that would have sacrificed her life for the safety of those around her—who could have been more qualified for the task ?

But, alas, for worldly projects ! After riding many a long mile with a broken stirrup leather or loosened saddle—after riding a third of the circumference of the globe, over all kinds of country, and never once meeting with the slightest accident, she was at last struck down whilst sitting quietly at rest.

Full of life and fun—quaint and quick at repartee —enjoying what the masculine vocabulary designates "chaff," she was often an object of a little wholesome awe as well as love. In fact, it would be difficult to find a more formidable opponent in a case of "banter;" but soft, delicate, and graceful, in all she said or did,

she never permitted her highest spirits to carry her into anything like a remark that could wound the most sensitive feelings. A bright vein of humour, which might have been mistaken for satire by those who did not know her, was ever ready on her lip. Her "papers" furnished to the "Conference" at Croydon (1869-70) were characterized by the same style, and were highly complimented by the President.

Shortly after returning from the trip in Wales, to which allusion has been made, and where everybody, as everybody knows, is called "JONES"; whilst residing in the lanes about Chelmarsh Hall, she met a friend who was mounted on a pony.

"Good morning, Miss," said Mr. B.

"Good morning, Mr. B.," responded MARIE, "that's "a nice pony of yours."

"O very," said Mr. B., "he's Welsh."

"Indeed," replied the pretty equestrian, "then I "suppose he's called 'JONES.'"

* * * *

Enough has perhaps been now said to satisfy the reader with respect to the early life of her whose romantic death has aroused his curiosity; but one can

hardly turn without reluctance from the contemplation of a character so lovely.

I will however conclude this portion of my self-imposed, but highly-prized, task, with a quotation from a letter written soon after MARIE'S death, which will but serve as an echo of upwards of a hundred which her parents received on the sad occasion.

"The book* you speak of will, I fear, never do her "ample justice; for no praise could be considered too "great by those who knew her; but the outside world "may not believe that one so truly good ever blessed "this earth. In all our long acquaintance I never "saw her amiable temper once ruffled, although I have "seen cause for it."

I wonder how many of us will have this written in a hundred letters from different friends and acquaintance, when we shall have concluded our mission on earth!

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* The present work then in contemplation.

Chapter II.

We must now return to that portion of our narrative which more immediately comes under the title of "Two Years in the Wheatland."

Mr. WINTER WOOD having returned from the Continent, finally disposed of his family estate, and become weary of a life to which he had not been accustomed, began to sigh for his old haunts amidst the wilds of Dartmoor, or some other congenial atmosphere.

A pack of foxhounds became his settled purpose, and he set to work to look out for a vacant mastership. Accompanied by his beloved MARIE, he first visited several of the western packs, among others the South Devon and Isle of Wight, with that of his old friend and prince of sportsmen, Mr. CHARLES TRELAWNY; and finally, whilst staying at Hastings, and hunting with the East Sussex, heard of the position of the Wheatland, which had just ruptured with Mr. Lywood, and was hunting by committee as a tempo-

rary measure, whilst seeking a suitable man to take the horn.

Mr. Wood at once opened a correspondence, and after a negociation natural to the circumstances, was appointed Master in March, 1873. The terms of the appointment, however, were not exactly what the new Master desired, as the committee would not sell him the hounds, nor allow him to bring another pack; besides which, they insisted on retaining a certain controul over their kennel management quite incompatible with the position of Master.

M. F. H.'s will understand that these conditions were not mere questions of feeling, but absolutely opposed to the independence necessary for a Master to do justice to the subscribers and honour to himself.

Mr. Wood's sole object, however, was to settle with his family in his adopted country. He felt certain that by promptly throwing himself into his work, and with the valuable auxiliary he possessed in the pretty face and manners of his daughter, he should, in due time, succeed in gaining the confidence of the hunt in a sufficient degree to overcome the difficulties he had met with.

Thus confident, he took Chelmarsh Hall, and with his whole heart in his new work, at once set about ingratiating himself with the members and friends of the hunt.

I need not say there is much to do, even with natural qualifications, to become a popular Master of Foxhounds. But Mr. Wood knew the influence of a young and pretty face when combined with affable and winning manners; and he knew he had this ever by his side to assist him in his task.

About this time the following excellent parody on the young Lochinvar of Walter Scott appeared in the local papers :—

THE WHEATLAND HUNTING SONG.

TUNE—"Lochinvar."

O the new Wheatland Master's come out of the West;
From the long list of claimants we thought him the best;
And save those good lads Alexander and Back,
And the Welshman Frank Jones, and the old Wheatland pack,
He'll need not a whisper—he'll heed not a frown;
But alike on the cynic and scorner look down.

He stayed not to cavil—he stopped not for pelf,
He scattered each thought that was centred in self;
And when he arrived in the land of his home
The lads all cried "Welcome—we're glad you are come."
For the country had long felt the want of a master
Who could temper the rash, and make others go faster.

So boldly he turned from the land of the Gaul,
Though of cousins and kinsmen he'd here none at all,
Till spake the Corve Dalesmen "O'er brake, bank and sward,"
(For the poor craven vulpecides said not a word)
"We will lead thee a measure o'er dingle and scaur
"Which, unlike the broad Esk, would have stopped Lochinvar.

"We long sought a master whose tastes might conform
"To the mad-cap—the slow—the fast—tame and lukewarm;
"And now he is come, we shall very soon see
"If he turns out the man he's expected to be;
"For to suit every shade of opinion and view
"It must be confessed he'll have something to do."

Whilst the mad-cap cries "forward"—the craven "hold back"
He'll greet all his friends and he'll throw off the pack;
He'll look down at the hounds—he'll look up at the sky
With a smile on his lip, but no tear in his eye;
All steady of purpose and firm to the end
He'll need neither promptings from foeman or friend.

So splendid a country—so gallant a band—
Such a stock of the right sort of varmint at hand,
There never was found from the pole to the line
From the days of Tom Moody or eke of Lang Syne;
And the borderers whisper "T'were better by far
"Seek a home in the Wheatland than palace elsewhere."

One blast on the horn and one wild ringing cheer
And the gallant old pack will be speedily there—
"Tally ho! o'er the hills the bold varmint is gone;
"Hark, away! through the dingle—the horsemen are done!
"Peace, Craven—see yonder they dash, and they're over
"To them are alike dyke, fence, dingle and cover."

There'll be mounting midst lads of the famous Corve Dale,
Davies, Corsers and Wadlows—they'll ride and they'll rail;
There'll be racing and chasing on Titterstone's top,
And woe to the wretch who's the first to say "stop."
So bold at a fence—so terrific in pace,
Then hurrah for the Wheatland, the Queen and the Chase.

NEMO.

He was charmed, too, with the character of the Wheatland country. It was wild and enterprising—never afflicted with that disease of fashionable hunts which arises from swell meets and crowded fields. The dandy of the diamond ring and flower-bedecked button-hole seldom made his appearance there.

In some measure also it reminded him of his favourite Dartmoor: for the Clee Hills loomed in the distance, giving augury of many a foaming run to come. It must be confessed also that the historical nature of the pack in some measure justified the committee in their careful guardianship of it. An existence of more than 100 years is something to be proud of in a hunt; to say nothing of having to boast of Tom Moody as one of its huntsmen.

In Barrow churchyard, near the centre of the Wheatland country, a plain flat stone marks Tom Moody's grave; and it is understood that a fox contrives periodically to get killed on the spot. For the truth of this latter assertion I will not answer; but there is no doubt that the famous hunter whose voice had so often re-echoed "all round the Wrekin" lies buried within its shade.

In this matter-of-fact age it is always a pity to strip anything of the little romance it may have acquired; but if report speaks true, the character of Tom Moody would do little credit to the huntsmen of the present day. In fact, he is described by those whose ancestors remembered him, as little better than a forest savage in dress, manners, and habits.

But turning from the past to the present—in addition to the ordinary difficulties of an M. F. H., Mr. Wood found the Wheatland hunt "divided "against itself;" and the supporters in a state of disorder and disruption in consequence of the resignation of Mr. Lywood. In fact, these differences of opinion had been the cause of the resignation; whilst the resignation itself, so far from curing the evil, seemed only to leave the burning embers in the hands of Mr. Lywood's supporters.

A fine sportsman and devoted to his post—Mr. Lywood had offended in wishing to be sole master: for the same careful and paternal eye had been reserved for him as was now chafing the new master. It may be true that Mr. Lywood might have aspired to this position by a softer inspiration; but every

experienced hand knows that a little awe as well as gentle persuasion is necessary among refractory spirits.

The "Corve Dale Division," as they were termed—consisting principally of open-hearted, liberal and hospitable yeomen—were the most important of Mr. Lywood's supporters; but as they did not represent the money majority on the subscription list, their favourite master went to the wall; and hence the position we have described—the committee working as a sort of compromise to prevent the utter breaking up of the hunt; some of the former members, even then, absenting themselves entirely from the field.

Mr. Winter Wood had thus a work of conciliation, as well as of general reconstruction, before him. In order to unite all parties, he had to receive the versions of all and to uphold none—a task, if not Herculean, a little too Protean to be exactly palatable to an honest mind, and requiring a forbearance which Mr. Wood is said to have carried too far. Nearly the whole of the summer which followed his appointment was devoted by the new master and his daughter to surveying the country and calling on all the members and friends of the hunt.

It would be out of place for me here to devote much space to a statement of the result of these interviews and complimentary visits. There are hundreds who know more of that than I do, and who at least must remember the smiling face of her who seemed so happy at the warm receptions she met with. One thing is certain—that it must be a marvel if she made anything but friends; for she, whom nature had forbidden to put on a haughty look, and whose hand was ever ready alike to grasp that of poor or rich—could hardly fail to enlist sympathy unless those with whom she came in contact were marvellously disposed to cavil. Of this latter description, however, I believe there were none. At all events, there is no record of aught but the kindliest feeling between all parties; and the evenings, after the sunny rides over Wenlock Edge and amidst the beautiful scenery of Corve Dale and the Wrekin, were spent by the love-linked pair in describing and discussing the kind receptions and open-hearted Shropshire hospitality they had met with in every direction. The names of Mr. Evan Davies and of Mr. Sparrow, of Preen Manor, must ever remain conspicuous in the memory of the survivor of

the two wanderers, as instances of such hospitality and hearty welcome.

At Preen Manor the "callers" were imprisoned the whole day by the combined influence of a deluge of rain and the insistant hospitality of Mr. and Mrs. Sparrow. Towards evening, the torrent having somewhat abated, the word "homeward" was given. A rainbow of the most extraordinary brilliancy—which spanned the magnificent valley in front of Preen House—and wet clothing of very ordinary occurrence, being the principal features of the dark 15 miles' ride back to Chelmarsh Hall. MARIE'S sweet laugh and cheerful voice can hardly be numbered among the salient points, for the reason that on all such occasions they were never absent.

The summer waned, and "all went merry as a "marriage bell." The cub-hunting was successful; and the first "meet," which, according to long-established custom, took place at the "Crown Hotel," Bridgnorth, was the most brilliant ever known. Mr. Whitefoot, with his accustomed liberality, gave a sumptuous breakfast to all comers—the celebrated "Wheatland Cup" went round, and capital intro-

ductory speeches from Mr. Cecil Purton, and others, ushered the new *régime* into special notice with a most hearty welcome: so brilliant indeed was the assemblage of veteran sportsmen surrounding Mr. Whitefoot that one of the speakers happily compared him to nothing short of the Duke of Wellington at one of the Waterloo banquets.

The hounds were in splendid condition, and Alexander looked not at all unworthy of his whilom predecessor before alluded to; in fact, the whole turn-out appeared before the public in a form which its proud history had no reason to be ashamed of.

Philip Back and Frank Jones—the whippers-in—were both handsome young men, and obtained their meed of admiration from the fair sex. The former was brought by the new master from his native Devon, whilst the latter was a Welshman; and, for his constant and indefatigable attention throughout the season to his young mistress—on whom he was more particularly engaged to attend—(only one whip being stipulated for by the hunt) his name deserves especial mention—and at the wish of Mr. Winter Wood I make it here with his gratitude and thanks.

It need hardly be said that Miss Winter Wood was present at this first public meet on her favourite "Jessie"—looking all that youth, beauty, and a perfect equestrian could do; bright and smiling, she seemed to be happy: but those who knew her, knew well, that her happiness was centred more in the success of her father's mission than in her own personal enjoyment. Suffice it to say, that all went off well that day, together with every succeeding one during the season. The sport was good throughout, and all seemed pleased; some very fine runs being chronicled in the sporting papers of the season, and the "Old Wheatland Pack"—as the members love to style it—seemed to be once more all that could be desired.

If I am wrong, there are enough who were familiar with all the events to correct me: but as no whisper of dissatisfaction ever reached the master's ears, I think he is fairly justified in believing that it was as I have stated.

The "good old custom" of hunting breakfasts was carried out in a style which did the highest credit to Shropshire hospitality; and whatever may be said by the keen sportsman at the little delays they incur,

there is no doubt that they tend to keep up the general spirit and popularity of the cause. If the "Wheatland Cup" brings an occasional indulger to his mother earth, he generally arises like a giant refreshed; and I believe no man ever rides so boldly as he does with a crushed hat and mud plastered coat.

One characteristic of the Wheatland country is certainly a joy to the foxhunter's heart. It is *not* that the enemy to foxhunting is the exception; but it *is* that he does not exist—at least he dares not exist in open day; and I should much prefer not being the man who—known to have trapped a fox—made his appearance amidst the assembled crowd on market day! In fact, foxhunting in the Wheatland is an institution: and a hint of its non-existence would be received with the same smile as would the suggestion of an English forest without its native oak.

But to return to our narrative—Miss Winter Wood had, on coming into the country, ridden fearlessly and well on different occasions, which, from her conspicuous position, elicited a praise of a rough and ready description from a certain portion of the community, which, although not ill meaning, seemed to be likely to give

her a reputation for hard riding which her purely feminine character did not appreciate. At all events, nothing could be more repugnant to her feelings than the prospect of the fame she seemed to be acquiring; and from that moment her performances in the Wheatland were tame indeed in comparison with her former self. Frank Jones was deputed to wait upon her, and to leave his post at any time if he found her likely to be unattended or inclined to return home; and so faithfully did he carry out these instructions on all occasions that we cannot help repeating it as part of the memory of one who so often mentioned it in life.

But to bring the season to a close: all seemed to have gone well; even the weather during this winter had been of the most exceptional character—only one hunting day had been lost by frost; and the continuance of a clear blue sky, with a mild and settled atmosphere, were conducive to scent in spite of the traditional "cloudy sky" theory: in fact, the uninterrupted fine weather had led to the remark that if English winters were always such, the whole world would select England as a winter residence.

A grand hunt ball, in the Agricultural Hall, Bridg-

north (also a resuscitation of ancient usages) was well and fashionably attended; in fact, a gayer or more animated scene could scarcely be conceived, than that which the fine room, with its tasteful decorations, presented: conspicuous among the latter was, of course, the proud scroll with the words:—WHEATLAND HUNT, ESTABLISHED 1763.

Nothing, indeed, seemed wanting in this hour of brilliancy to gladden and gratify the young heart: yet this was one of the saddest evenings MARIE ever spent; and tears, more than once, stood in her full bright eye!

This may appear strange; and an intimate knowledge of her extreme sensitiveness alone can explain it; whilst those who were acting parties on the scene may now accept an explanation which, under other circumstances, could never have been given. To meet kindness with apathy, or unacknowledged warmth, was so foreign to her heart, that she could not act out the part.

Arriving early at the ball-room, she was at once surrounded by youthful aspirants of a certain *calibre* for her partnership in the dance. Thus, her pro-

gramme would have been filled in an instant to the exclusion of all who were expected, and who had previously lodged a retainer. In this perplexing position, which had, however, been in some measure foreseen, she was prompted to decline all early claims. This placed her in a position which, between the rules of etiquette, her natural ingenuousness and consideration for her own and her father's position, worked on that painful sensitiveness in the fear of giving the most trivial pain, and annoyed her beyond measure.

The good nature of the parties concerned healed the wound to a great extent; but MARIE declared her positive determination never to place herself in such a position again: and, like all and every of her other pledges, she kept her word.

Thus concluded Mr. Winter Wood's first year of mastership, and thus concluded what we think may very appropriately be designated the year of PEACE AND PROSPERITY.

Chapter III.

Towards the end of the season which we have just described, the subject of the next year's arrangements naturally came to the surface. Mr. Winter Wood having accomplished the task he had set himself, felt he had done sufficient to merit the confidence of the hunt, and offered to make a more permanent compact, if the committee would consent to untie his hands.

This the latter refused to do—still insisting to hold such controul over the hounds as would effectually stay all free action on the part of the master, in fact, no consent to any change in the existing contract could be obtained.

There were some, it is true, who were ready to support the claims of the master; but the fear of renewed dissensions made them silent. There was a *non possumus* party; and, in view of past events, it was deemed desirable to respect their *dicta*.

Finding all chance of altering a position which no Master in England could have accepted with a proper respect for the great initials which he represented, Mr. Winter Wood tendered his resignation.

A long series of overtures, both to him and to other gentlemen, followed. No one could be found both willing and fitting for the post.

Isolated communities are, of course, all more or less, affected with that malady which the French call *arrièré*, and an example of it would undoubtedly have been brought about by the *non possumus* party in this instánce, in the shape of an abolished hunt, rather than consent to any innovation or part with old *Dreadnaught* and *Dragon* whom they had contemplated hunting a cold scent till they believed no other hounds in England would have done likewise.

As we shall not probably be able to claim a better opportunity, we must here make a slight digression, in order to remark on the effect of concentrating our ideas too much into one focus—or in other words, of living all one's life in an isolated nook.

This is not peculiar to the Wheatland Hunt, nor even to those who made up the rest of the community

in that district, but to all who do the same thing. They look into no other mirror but that which reflects their own image. They proffer you their own shadow, but turn aside from the contemplation of any other person's. I have even known this state of high-opinionativeness carried so far as to produce a forbidding of intercommunication between two families in the desert, because they could not agree on the exact shade of the local standard.

Should any one marvel at such a statement or doubt its accuracy—let him live in isolation a quarter of a century, and gaze each day on a spark from his own fire-side: he will inevitably end by fancying it a brilliant planet!

Thus, the Bucolic exquisite vents his wrath in the harmless form of denying the benefit of self to those who might not appreciate it if they had it.

This state of society cannot be more appropriately described than by repeating the following incident, especially as it was one of MARIE'S own favourite recitals:—

Whilst riding in the narrow lanes of Devonshire she encountered a group of little boys who were

returning from school. The way was so narrow that it was almost dangerous to pass unless all drew in on one side. This the boys saw, and all rushed to the hedgerow; one, however, being on one side, and the rest on the other: whilst the solitary one exclaimed to his companions, "You stupid fools, why don't you all go on one side?"

This, as I have said, was a favourite anecdote of MARIE. It seemed to strike her as so characteristic of the presumption of individuals of the class to which I have alluded. The boy in the narrow Devonshire lane is one of our commonest characters. When the enthusiast propounds his indignant pity for those who differ from him and designates them as "deluded," I always think he ought in honesty to say, "You stupid fools, why don't you all go on my side?"

The only advice I can give those who receive their information from "great authorities," if they have neither power nor opportunity to search for themselves, is to make the best of it; but, when practicable, I can give much better—which is, to "go and see," or, in other words, to investigate for themselves.

These "authorities" form a wonderful resource for

the easy-going and inexperienced : but when I read in Murray's Handbook that the three trees on Byron's Island in Lake Leman are *elms*, I smile at his blunder, because I know enough of arboreal productions to tell him that they are *poplars*.

Had I not ascertained this for myself, I should undoubtedly have believed Mr. Murray.

Be it as it may, Mr. Winter Wood, like the good natured or weak minded—whichever way the reader pleases to look upon it—was finally induced by the persuasion of one or two active members of the committee to continue his mastership for another season.

I must not however conceal the fact that the master's motives were not altogether disinterested. He had taken Chelmarsh Hall for a longer period, which precluded his accepting another "country," though one or two others were open to him. This, with some other minor considerations, induced him to continue his post another year, surrounded by the same chafing conditions.

From this time, however, as he plainly intimated to the committee would be the case, his interest in the hunt naturally decreased, and nothing went again as before.

A kind of unsettled purpose seemed to come over everything; although no one could tell exactly why; but uncertainty soon changed to action; and circumstances conspired to produce a sort of running fire all through the season.

Strange—strange, indeed, that it should have terminated its last hour of existence with a fatal scene such as no romance of tragedy could exceed.

But, to our narrative (season 1874-75). The cub-hunting came again; and, although there was nothing to complain of, there did not seem that much had been done. The master's heart had not warmed to its work, and appeared only to be acting within the shackles which the committee had insisted on retaining around it. Mr. Wood had indeed foreshadowed, even in writing, this state of things to the committee whilst they were urging him to continue at his post.

Mr. Lywood, too, had made his appearance from America. This stirred up ancient strifes, and a cross-fire of words, threats, and insinuations, seemed to portend a storm.

Challenges and insults were sent and received through various channels—but from the want of

direct communication between the principal parties, no doubt a good deal of the *piquancy* had its origin *en route.* Even public-house mobbing was said to have been resorted to, but whether this had its origin in the fears of one party, or in the bad taste of the other, I will not say.

One gentleman offered to ride his donkey against another's hunter. The latter retorted that his challenger had better not ride his own animal, lest the public should mistake the one for the other. This is a specimen of the harmless kind of feeling which existed. There was much other of a very different description; but, contrary to general expectation, no serious encounter took place.

It may be said that such anecdotes are not legitimate narrative—but as the committee were in some wise more than passive in the matter, I do not see how I can omit these extracts from the archives of the hunt.

The first "meet" again produced a good muster at the "Crown Hotel," Bridgnorth, but far inferior, both in numbers and spirit to that of the previous year.

Mr. Winter Wood having thoroughly determined

not to hold his post a third year, and seeing the strait in which the country would, in all probability be placed, introduced a friend—Mr. Ross—a well-known owner of a pack of drag hounds—from Surrey, as a candidate for the future mastership.

It was arranged, by a private understanding with the actual master, that Mr. Ross should show himself in the field, and eventually, horse the servants, in order that the hunt might see what he was willing and able to do in the way of practical work.

All parties were well pleased with these arrangements, and the turns-out gave great satisfaction; but the admixture of some drag hounds which Mr. Ross had brought with him (owing to a fatality of circumstances more than to any fault in the hounds) first created some animadversion.

Busy *quid nuncs* next commenced a series of critiques on Mr. Ross's peculiarities, as well as obtrusive scrutiny into his establishment, and other matters, whilst the dashing spirits of the field twitted him on account of the extreme precautions he took against riding over the hounds.

Our aspirant, too, excelled in feats of physical skill,

and was fond of exhibiting them. This was all very well, had not mischievous gossips traded on it for their own gratification; in fact, they gave rise to the *canard* that on one occasion, whilst teaching a lady to pick up a penny piece from the floor without bending arms or knees, he had the misfortune to see his pupil fall forward on her nose. This, of course, damaged the reputation of the teacher as well as the personal appearance of the lady. In a word—all things combined—it was soon understood that the new candidate would not run in the harness of the committee as the future master.

He had, however, made many friends, and his supporters raised their voices in his favour; so, altogether, the complication was formidable, and the confusion became doubly confounded.

A rebellion among the servants was on several occasions on the point of breaking out, which required all the tact of the master to suppress. By a good deal of perseverance he succeeded; his object being to lead on the existing arrangement to the end of the season, and have done with the whole affair.

Miss Winter Wood had joined in the chase on

several occasions early in the season; but the complicated state of affairs made her reluctant to mix much in the hunting field under such circumstances: her extreme and almost painful delicacy leading her at last to accept some very pressing invitations which she had received from friends in the West of England, rather than risk the alternative of being mixed up with any of these "misunderstandings."

Her favourite old mare, "Jessie," too, was lame—a legacy from a hard day with the "Albrighton" the previous season.

So in the month of November MARIE left Chelmarsh for Torquay, and several other hospitable roofs, to which she had been invited.

Need I turn aside to say how many letters lie before me attesting the love and admiration she won during these brief visits? Yet who would deny a moment for a tear over such a pile!

The season in the Wheatland wore on with as much tranquility as could be expected—the tact of the master having bridged over most of the difficult passes.

Day after day, however, brought its events of a

more or less exciting character. Deep snow and continued frost added to the conspicuous features of the scene. Good sport, however, prevailed in the open weather, and during one of these "shuts-up" a run of a peculiar description took place over many miles of deep snow (recorded in the *Sporting Gazette*, Jan. 9th, 1875). Several other runs were also recorded in that and other sporting papers.

The death of "Jessie" was the next sad event which claims a place in this eventful season.

We wish for many reasons that we could pass this over without further comment, but it is so intimately connected with poor MARIE'S history, that it claims a few words which we reluctantly record.

The lameness of the favourite old mare continuing, she was consigned to the care of a neighbouring yeoman, for a small sum, on condition that he would use her kindly, and employ her for nothing but riding over his farm or for stud purposes.

I wish I could close her narrative here, but, alas! she was not accustomed to straitened rations amidst frost and snow.

After winning the admiring glance of many a fair

one's eye, and receiving many a pat on the neck from a delicate white hand, she succumbed to the inhospitality of the climate and her keeper. Like the heroes of Moscow, after a hundred victories, she fell a victim to the miscalculation or recklessness of her chief.

Poor Jessie! her fate claimed a tear from her kind and gentle mistress—and she won it—a tear of regret at her unforeseen fate, and of gratitude for the thousands of miles of willing servitude across all kinds of difficult ground without a false step!

The fate of "Jessie" affected MARIE deeply. A large portion of her happiest and most joyous hours had been spent on the back of the faithful old mare, and it had been requited with seeming ingratitude.

No wonder then that MARIE'S gentle spirit betrayed the sternest mood of which it was capable. This, indeed, was no passing caprice; but like her character in all things, whilst uttered with a plaintive sweetness, it was expressed with a firmness and decision which bespoke its intense sincerity, and left no doubt on the mind of the hearer that its full force was intended.

How little did we then think that the sorrowing mistress would so soon follow her faithful steed!—

that she would so soon be wept over by others in her turn!

But, to return to the field. Time--which waits neither for the pleasure of kings nor the dissensions of sporting men—wore on; and the season drew to a close with as good a record of sport as the weather would permit. Alexander was as full of reckless energy as ever, and although he did not maintain the most amicable relations with Mr. Ross, he was well mounted and never far from his hounds.

Mr. Lywood, though well handled by the "Corve Dale Division," ran riot at times; but was, on the whole, more under controul than was expected. Like Mr. Ross's drag hounds, he often got on the wrong scent, but threw up before much mischief was done: like the said hounds, too, he was as often sinned against as sinning.

Miss Winter Wood returned from the West soon after Christmas, and, thanks to the kindness of Mr. Pierson Gordon, and others, who supplied the place of her favourite "Jessie," she again joined in the closing scene of the drama.

Few of the time-honoured sporting breakfasts had

been given to the Wheatland field this season. The spirit seemed to flag.

Few ladies had appeared at the meets; but as matters seemed now to wear only a chronic sort of warfare, there was no reason why the most delicately minded should not ignore its existence altogether.

"Wheatland men," wrote many a sympathising friend after her death, "will long remember that bright innocent face," and no doubt many will remember her happy smile on that bright March morning when the hounds met at Glaseley. MARIE, mounted on Mr. Gordon's little chestnut, was present to welcome and to greet. A slow hunting run followed, whilst she and her brother rode quietly across country to look on.

Whilst in the Uplands Road, and within a half mile of her home, she was suddenly seized with a faintness, and had just time to apprise her brother of the fact before falling into his arms and afterwards to the ground.

By an extraordinary fatality which almost seemed to have been a persistency of Providence from her birth to her death, her father was at her side. Strange also

that her medical attendant should have been close at hand; and it hardly can be necessary to say that all was done to restore the patient's health.

Even whilst stretched on the ground in a state of semi-consciousness, and supported in her father's arms, the same beautiful spirit of abnegation which characterised her life could not help displaying itself as she often looked up in his face and said, "Don't wait for me—I'm better now." The fear that he should lose a pleasure was more to her than the pangs of a throbbing brow.

She recovered sufficiently to be taken home in a carriage, and in a few days was again on horseback, and seemed to have resumed her usual health.

As a proof of the suddenness of this attack, we may mention the incident that not half an hour before it took place she was about to ride over a flight of hurdles, where some young men were making an exhibition of a series of bungles; but being on a horse of whose leaping qualifications she knew little or nothing, she was dissuaded from the attempt.

By another extraordinary decree of fate, her father had not gone to an appointment which had been made

for that very day at Bury St. Edmunds, where he was to have met the committee of the Suffolk Hunt for the purpose of making arrangements for the mastership of that pack.

I am aware that it is useless to mention such incidents unless prepared to support them by a superstitious feeling. But, however remarkable this fact and many others may be, I do not lay claim to anything beyond stating them as indisputable. The reader can invest them with more importance, or smile at them with contempt, as it may best please him.

The close of the season was now at hand, and Mr. Winter Wood, in order to finish it appropriately and resign his mastership in becoming order, made the last fixture for Chelmarsh Hall, and invited "all-comers" to a farewell breakfast.

The morning was fine, and all looked gay and cheerful at the hall. The family breakfasted early, and MARIE, attired in her riding-habit, received every guest at the door with her usual bright and happy smile—shaking hands with each as he arrived.

What she suffered on that morning will now never

be known, but it is suspected from many circumstances which have transpired since, that she was far from well.

Those who knew her would not be surprised if it could be ascertained that she had a difficulty in keeping up to the last. Consideration for others was a quality so prominent in her character on all occasions, that it would not be at all surprising if she struggled hard on that eventful morning lest her pain should interfere with the pleasure of others. In fact, there is little doubt that such was the case, as she sadly smiled at the feelings of regret expressed by many that her father should be resigning the mastership of the hounds.

Suffice it now to say in conclusion of this real romance, that she had just welcomed the *last comer*, when she walked into the drawing-room, threw herself on a couch, and, lifting her hand to her head, exclaimed, "Oh!" She never spoke afterwards!

Her father was again at her side, and two medical men, who happened to be among the guests, were immediately with her. It may well be understood that all which they could suggest was tried—but in

vain—in fifteen minutes she was dead! And he who had just 21 years before welcomed her in his arms, and might almost be said to have lived at her side ever since, carried her to her chamber a lifeless corpse!

Her steed stood pawing in the stable, saddled and bridled, with groom beside, expecting at every moment to be summoned to the door.

With glance elate and throbbing heart, she was momentarily expected to lay her gentle hand upon the rein: and for that soft and genial greeting, with which she never failed to meet each and all with whom she came in contact, the preparation was complete.

The steel was glittering in the bright sunlight which peered through the casement. The courser neighed to the tramp of hoofs on the outside, and his eager eye, as he curved around with startled gaze from side to side, seemed to ask, why tarried that gentle hand so long!

One Being alone can answer, why? The Almighty One who created her alone can say. It is allowed to us sad fragile mortals only to know that at the

moment of which we speak she was lying a lifeless corpse on that couch which she had so lately quitted in apparent health and strength!

It can hardly be wondered at that a character of such loveliness as that of the brief-lived MARIE should inspire something more than love.

Her father writing shortly after her death thus expresses himself:—"I should describe her as an "angel of goodness from her birth. Yes—often have "I looked upon that girl with a mixture of love and "admiration till it has amounted to reverence—such "as one would feel at looking upon something Divine. "If this was wicked—I have been very wicked."

In another communication from the same pen, just received, we find:—"Did you ever see a loved one "die without being able to recall a single instance "where a moment's vexation or sadness had been "caused by the dying one? If so, you have a great "and glorious past to remember—aye, as great and "glorious as mine, *but not more so.*"

Marvel not, reader, at such impassioned words. If you or I had lost a friend who had ridden upwards of 7,000 miles at our side, I think it would have

caused a pang; but what should we feel if that companion had been allied by every tie which existence could produce to add a charm to the companionship?

But on such idolatry perhaps may be seen the hand of Providence; for such worship, may be, is not allowed on earth.

Thus ends my romance—a romance of simple matter-of-fact reality, without a word, as far as I know, of embellishment or exaggeration. Thus ends a vision of human life—thus fell a meteor, beautiful in its simplicity—thus fell MARIE, a child of heaven-born purity and goodness, who, during her whole life—alas! too brief—whilst showering joys upon all—never gave a pang!

We must return for a moment in order to close our narrative.

The consternation of the large party assembled at Chelmarsh Hall needs no portrayal. Other pens have undertaken this already. But what words shall ever describe such a scene? We will not attempt it.

The hounds were immediately sent to their kennels, and the assembled party—many from long distances—went their way incredulous in their own information.

The peasant wept in the green lanes which she had so lately traversed—the soldier sent verses from distant India, and the dwellers in the hamlet brought the very primroses on which she had so lately gazed to decorate her coffin!

I do not wish to place importance on coincidences; but it is at least remarkable, that after a year of such undisturbed success as the previous one, every kind of reverse should have crowded into this; even the elements themselves joining in the general disorder.

Be this as it may, thus ended the second season—THE YEAR OF WAR AND MISFORTUNE.

CONCLUSION.

To live again is the hope of the immortal soul. To this in some wise all aspire; and by that inborn feeling of the human breast which God hath implanted within us, we know that to this we shall all attain.

To live in the memory of the world was certainly a thought which never occurred to her whose brief career we have so imperfectly sketched. Simplicity was her motto. Affection was the only altar to which she carried her worldly offerings.

Should whispers reach me saying, "Let her memory die," I will reply by exclaiming—die!—for what, then, has God created the most beautiful examples of the human mind? To me it seems that such a character could only be created *to live.* To let it die would be to rob the living of a vision which God has created for their delight.

To let it die would be to ignore the divine imagery of the Creator, as well as a desertion of that duty which is ours when we have it in our power to point the traveller to a light of joy.

As if reluctant yet to quit its favoured dwelling, life seemed to linger over the cold corpse of the once lovely MARIE—indeed, she looked so beautiful in death, with her profusion of long dark hair around her, that many who came to gaze upon her, would not believe she was dead until they touched her cold pale face. Thus lay her pretty features as if carved in purest marble; almost unchanged, save in the tint of life which no man can describe.

But our tale is done. It is not for us to linger here. Memory will long dwell upon her form and hallow the joys she scattered as she passed. Those who loved her will see her live till Memory dies.

On a romantic spot which once formed part of the chase belonging to Netley Abbey, and overlooking the beautiful old ruins is erecting a simple villa.

It has been named after our loved one, and there "those who loved her" purpose resting in contempla-

tion of that beautiful but ruined pile: so emblematic of human hopes and joys.

In the last letter received from her father on the subject of this little book he thus concludes:—

"For three months I was wandering over the land "in search of a home, but found none to my taste: "at last I was attracted to this spot—I saw it— "I loved it—and I called it MARIESTEAD."

The following piece, extracted from a volume of *In Memoriam Poems*, printed for private circulation, immediately after MARIE'S death, may not form an inappropriate close to these pages :—

FAREWELL TO CHELMARSH HALL.

Farewell old hall ! and now that I depart,
  Cast up thy bill and let me know the score :
Say if thou hast a claim upon my heart ;
  That I may pay thee all, and close thy door.

Tell me the items, one by one, and true ;
  And why thou claim'st for memories of the past,
For I have paced thy old halls through and through,
  And found no record but of grief at last.

Is it that thou hast guarded with an eye
  Of jealous care, beside thy sacred hearth,
The form I madly loved ? for it was nigh
  To madness so to love a form on earth.

Is it for this that when I turn to go,
  Thou callest ever with a new demand ?
What would'st thou more that I on thee bestow
  Save bitter tears and friendship's proffered hand ?

'Tis true that thou hast gathered joys around,
  And gladdened her short hours with many a beam,
O'er which my heart leaps to its widest bound
  And fain would muse in one eternal dream.

Yes ; thou hast guarded her all faithfully,
  And gilded o'er the passing hours in bliss ;
But, oh ! hast thou not also seen her die ?
  Then what can Earth to me return for this ?

Go, ere I turn for ever from thy door ;
  Mark the response to every silent prayer
With which my tears have stained each mouldering
    floor,
And left as feeling's last mementoes there.

Then claim no more, if wanderer I may be;
  Or fated in some distant land to dwell.
I pay thee all in tears of memory,
  Both for thy welcome and thy parting knell,
  Give me thy silent hand, old hall, farewell! farewell!

T. W. W.

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